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A LARGE PACKING HOUSE has closed a Contract to LOCATE at SWEETWATER, Texas.

THREE OTHER LARGE PACKING HOUSE people are at Sweetwater LOOKING over the situation with view of LOCATING.

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## Sweetwater Development Co.

320 Trust Bldg., El Paso, Texas.



### THE CIRCULAR STAIRCASE

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Illustrations by Ray Walters

(Continued From Yesterday.)

It is not necessary to detail the fluctuations of hope and despair, and not a little fear of what lay beyond, with which I twisted and turned the knob. It moved, but nothing seemed to happen, and then I discovered the trouble. I pushed the knob vigorously to one side, and the whole mantel swung loose from the wall almost a foot, revealing a cavernous space beyond.

I took a long breath, closed the door from the trunkroom into the hall—thank heaven, I did not lock it—and pulling the mantel-door wide open, I stepped into the chimney-room. I had time to get a hazy view of a small portable safe, a common wooden table and a chair—then the mantel door swung to, and clicked behind me. I stood quite still for a moment, in the darkness, unable to comprehend what had happened. Then I turned and beat furiously at the door with my fists. It was closed and locked again, and my fingers in the darkness slid over a smooth wooden surface without a sign of a knob.

I was furiously angry—at myself, at the mantel-door, at everything. I did not fear suffocation; before the thought had come to me I had already seen a gleam of light from the two small ventilating pipes in the roof. They supplied air, but nothing else. The room itself was shrouded in blackness.

I must have dozed off. I am sure I did not faint. I was never more composed in my life. I remember planning, if I were not discovered, who would have my things. I knew Liddy would want my heliotrope poplin, and she's a fright in lavender. Once or twice I heard mice in the partitions, and so I sat on the table, with my feet on the chair. I imagined I could hear the search going on through the house, and once some

one came into the trunkroom; I could distinctly hear footsteps.

"In the chimney! In the chimney!" I called with all my might, and was rewarded by a piercing shriek from Liddy and the slam of the trunkroom door.

I felt easier after that, although the room was oppressively hot and enervating. I had no doubt the search for me would now come in the right direction, and after a little, I dropped into a doze. How long I slept I do not know.

I must have been several hours, for I had been tired from a busy day, and I waked stiff from my awkward position. I could not remember where I was for a few minutes, and my head felt heavy and congested. Gradually I roused to my surroundings, and to the fact that in spite of ventilators, the air was bad and growing worse. I was breathing long, gasping respirations, and my face was damp and clammy. I must have been there a long time, and the searchers were probably hunting outside the house, dredging the creek, or beating the woodland. I knew that another hour or two would find me unconscious, and with my inability to cry out would go my only chance of rescue. It was the combination of bad air and heat, probably, for some inadequate ventilation was coming through the pipes. I tried to retain my consciousness by walking the length of the room and back, over and over, but I had not the strength to keep it up, so I sat down on the table again, my back against the wall.

The house was very still. Once my straining ears seemed to catch a footfall beneath me, possibly in my own room. I groped for the chair from the table, and pounded with it frantically on the floor. But nothing happened; I realized bitterly that if the sound was heard at all, no doubt it was classed with the other rappings that had so alarmed me recently.

And then—I heard sounds from below me, in the house. There was a peculiar throbbing, vibrating noise that I felt rather than heard, much like the pulsing beat of fire engines in the city. For one awful moment I thought the house was on fire, and every drop of blood in my body gathered around my heart; then I knew. It was the engine of the automobile, and Halsey had come back. Hope sprang up afresh. Halsey's clear head and Gertrude's intuition might do what Liddy's hysteria and three detectives had failed in.

After a time I thought I had been right. There was certainly something going on down below; doors were slamming, people were hurrying through the halls, and certain high notes of excited voices penetrated to me shrilly. I hoped they were coming closer, but after a time the sounds died away below, and I was left to the silence and heat, to the weight of the darkness, to the oppression of walls that seemed to close in on me and stifle me.

The first warning I had was a stealthy fumbling at the lock of the mantel-door. With my mouth open to scream, I stopped. Perhaps the situation had rendered me acute, perhaps it was instinctive. Whatever it was, I sat without moving, and some one outside, in absolute stillness, ran his fingers over the carving of the mantel and found the panel.

Now the sounds below redoubled; from the clatter and jarring I knew that several people were running up the stairs, and as the sounds approached, I could even hear what they said.

"Watch the end staircases!" Jamieson shouted. "Damnation—there's no light here!" And then a second later. "All together now. One—two—three—"

The door into the trunkroom had been locked from the inside. At the second that it gave, opening against the wall with a crash and evidently tumbling somebody into the room, the stealthy fingers beyond the mantel-door gave the knob the proper impetus, and—the door swung open, and closed again. Only—and Liddy always screams and puts her fingers in

her ears at this point—only now I was not alone in the chimney room. There was some one else in the darkness, some one who breathed hard, and who was so close I could have touched him with my hand.

I was in a paralysis of terror. Outside there were excited voices and incredulous oaths. The trunks were being jerked around in a frantic search, the windows were thrown open, only to show a sheer drop of 40 feet. And the man in the room with me leaned against the mantel-door and listened. His pursuers were plainly baffled; I heard him draw a long breath, and turn to grope his way through the blackness. Then—he touched my hand, cold, clammy, deathlike.

A hand in an empty room! He drew in his breath, the sharp intaking of horror that fills lungs suddenly collapsed. Beyond jerking his hand away instantly, he made no movement. I think absolute terror had him by the throat. Then he stepped back, without turning, retreating foot by foot from The Dread in the corner, and I do not think he breathed.

Then, with the relief of space between us, I screamed, ear-splittingly, madly, and they heard me outside.

"In the chimney!" I shrieked. "Behind the mantel! The mantel!"

With an oath the figure hurled itself across the room at me, and I screamed again. In his blind fury he had missed me; I heard him strike the wall. That one time I eluded him; I was across the room, and I had got the chair. He stood for a second, listening, then—he made another rush and I struck out with my weapon. I think it stunned him, for I had a second's respite when I could hear him breathing, and some one shouted outside:

"We—can't—get—in. How—does—it open?"

But the man in the room had changed his tactics. I knew he was creeping on me, inch by inch, and I could not tell from where. And then—he caught me. He held his hand over my mouth, and I bit him. I was helpless, strangling—and some one was trying to break in the mantel from outside. It began to yield somewhere, for a thin wedge of yellowish light was reflected on the opposite wall. When he saw that, my assailant dropped me with a curse; then—the opposite wall swung open noiselessly, closed again without a sound, and I was alone. The intruder was gone.

"In the next room!" I called wildly. "The next room!" But the sound of blows on the mantel drowned my voice. By the time I had made them understand, a couple of minutes had elapsed. The pursuit was taken up then, by all except Alex, who was determined to liberate me. When I stepped out into the trunkroom a free woman again I could hear the chase far below.

I must say, for all Alex's anxiety to set me free, he paid little enough attention to my plight. He jumped through the opening into the secret room and picked up the portable safe. "I am going to put this in Mr. Halsey's room, Miss Innes," he said, "and I shall send one of the detectives to guard it."

I hardly heard him. I wanted to laugh and cry in the same breath—to crawl into bed and have a cup of tea, and scold Liddy, and do any of the thousand natural things that I had never expected to do again. And the air! The touch of the cool night air on my face!

As Alex and I reached the second floor, Mr. Jamieson met us. He was grave and quiet, and he nodded comprehendingly when he saw the safe. (To be continued.)

MIDLAND TO HAVE \$50,000 WATER SYSTEM

Midland, Texas, Jan. 22.—Midland at last is to have a strictly up-to-date water system for both city water and fire protection. The \$50,000 bonds have already been approved and are in the hands of the lithograph company. Water is plentiful and two wells have been drilled. They tested 50 gallons each per minute for 12 hours pumping. A 100 foot standpipe and engine will be used for pressure.

## Removal Furniture Sale

Our sale closes next Saturday and if you would make a substantial saving in your furniture buying you will have this week in which to do so. Our temporary quarters will be at the old Paulson place, corner of First and Stanton, the only building to be had large enough to accommodate our stock, in which we will be able to keep it up to the usual standard and add any increase necessary. The building has five floors, is well lighted, and has other conveniences for display and space for handling our business. We will be glad to see our friends and customers here until our new store is completed.

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## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS ARE ALL PRESENT AT MEETING

No Executive Session Is Held, But All Business Is Discussed Openly—Superintendent Thinks the School Readers Too Deep for Small Children—Board Agrees—Manual Training Plant Ordered For the Vilas School.

For the first time in months, the school board held its regular monthly meeting at the city hall Friday night with a full board of trustees present. Harry A. Carpenter, J. H. Harper, J. G. House, W. L. Gaines, W. L. Peabody, W. L. Tooley, and Henry Welsh all being present. Superintendent F. M. Martin, and E. A. Ross, supervisor of manual training, were also present.

Professor Martin found an ideal topic for discussion in urging upon the board the necessity of purchasing auxiliary readers for the children in the lower grades. He read an excerpt from a description of the Niagara Falls in which appeared such words as "chaos," "cataclysm," "ponderous chasm," "marvelous calancess," and "chasmic." He went beyond the understanding of the 10 and 12 year old children who are supposed to use this book in the public schools.

He urged upon the school board the necessity of purchasing supplementary readers. After his report, then came the report of E. A. Ross, supervisor of the manual training department, in which he asked that an equipment for manual training be installed in the Vilas school for the pupils of the seventh grade and under, these pupils as well as those at Sunset school being being compelled to attend Mesa school for their manual training education. He said the equipment would cost not over \$1000, and urged the necessity of its establishment.

Henry Welsh moved that the recommendations be accepted. Thereupon, trustee Tooley made the motion, recommending the purchase of books for the lower grades, the recommendation being similar to that made by Mr. Martin, was introduced. She stated that it would necessitate the expenditure of \$225.

Welsh's first motion relative to the manual training department was carried and then Tooley's was presented and also met with the approval of the board. Mr. Tooley declared that he preferred the purchase of the supplemental readers before any money was expended on manual training apparatus.

**New Teachers.** The internal committee recommended the appointment of a resigning teacher, David Blackshear as teacher of mathematics in the high school and the appointment of A. H. Hughey to the position for the balance of the term.

Hughey is a graduate of Vanderbilt university, was appointed an assistant professor in mathematics. He came here a short time ago from Weatherford, Texas, and has been engaged in the practice of law.

Miss Kate Thomas, a graduate of Peabody university, was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of a teacher in the first grade whose name was not mentioned. Miss Allie George, of Fort Worth, a graduate of Chicago university, was appointed a teacher in the fifth grade at Vilas school, while Miss Mary Maxwell and Miss Una Elam were appointed extra teachers at the Beall school.

Miss Ruth Coleman was appointed supervisor of domestic economy, though her salary is not to be increased for the present.

Miss Clara Mundy, who had signed a contract for \$75 per month, said that she was not satisfied with the \$80 per month as that is the rate fixed for first year teachers at this season. However, the internal committee recommended that this be denied and it was not taken up by motion.

**To Lay Sidewalks.**

J. G. House stated that the city had demanded that the school board lay sidewalks around the various schools and together with Messrs. Carpenter and Harper he had gone over the ground with the city engineer and found that it would cost about \$2340. Henry Welsh made a motion that the external committee be authorized to advertise for bids in both El Paso newspapers, the bids to be received at the next regular meeting of the school board Feb. 14. This carried unanimously.

The pavements to be laid in front of the various schools are Mesa, 4900 square feet; Aoy, 5400; high school, 3810; Alamo, 2460; San Jacinto, 3740; Douglas, 2612, making a total of 22,322 square feet.

**Rent County School.**

Mr. House reported that the external committee met yesterday with the trustees of the county schools and agreed to rent the building near the Beall school in East El Paso now used by the county, until the end of May, at a monthly rental of \$15.

He explained that this building, which is to be used to care for the overflow at the Beall school, is claimed

by both the city and county and the fact that the city rents from the county does not jeopardize the rights of the former in its claim to the ownership of the building. The county authorities agreed to move out and give the city possession next Monday.

Then, for the first time in many months, the board adjourned without going into executive session.

**Superintendent's Report.**

The report of superintendent Martin in part follows:

**Midwinter Graduates.**

Just before the dismissal for the Christmas recess, nine students were graduated from the high school. This is the first time in the history of El Paso that a midwinter class of graduates has gone from the high school. Heretofore there have been so few that graduation has been deferred until the spring term. Of course with our system, of half grades and semi-annual promotions, it will naturally come about that there are some pupils who finish the high school at the end of the first semester of school. This year the number of those completing the course at the end of the first semester was sufficient for a mid-term class and as several of them were anxious to go straight from the high school to institutions of higher learning, and as it was necessary for them to matriculate in these institutions at the beginning of the second semester, it was deemed wise by the principal of the high school, and by the superintendent, to graduate these pupils two weeks before the end of the semester.

**Graduates Increase.** I wish to call your attention to the fact that there were nine graduates in this class, and that there will be 18 in the class to graduate in the spring, making a total of 27 graduates for the year. This should be particularly gratifying to the citizens of El Paso, in consideration of the fact that in 1908 there were only nine graduates, in 1907 there were only five; in 1906, there were seven, and in 1905, there were 14. This year's class then is nearly twice that of last year; nearly four times that of two years ago, and over five times that of three years ago.

The enrollment in our El Paso high school has never been what it should be, when we consider the number of those enrolled in the grades. The enrollment this year has been 251. Of this number 47 have withdrawn from school. I have asked the principal of the high school to make periodical reports as to the cause actuating pupils to leave the high school. The following is a digest of the causes impelling those who have thus far withdrawn:

**Why They Quit High School.** Four have gone to other literary schools for unknown reasons. One went to the business college where the course was shorter, and an easier road was offered to a business career. Eight withdrew on account of removal of family from the city. Two left on account of the fact that they were too poorly prepared to do high school work. Three were boarding pupils and returned home on account of homesickness or other reasons. Four were compelled to withdraw on account of the necessity of helping to support their families. One was listed as "trifling," and withdrawn by parent as he was doing no good. Ill health, weak eyes, and death in the family have been the causes of the withdrawal of 15. Seven have withdrawn on account of graduation. (Two of these graduated returned to the school to take post graduate courses) and two have left for reasons not ascertained.

**Post Graduate Course.** In my opinion there should be a post graduate normal course added to the high school under the direction of a

competent psychologist and expert in teaching. This course should be offered to the graduates of the high school who intend making teaching a profession. The course should consist of one year of strenuous study of psychology, pedagogy, the history of education, and allied subjects.

**Keeping Books.** During the Christmas holidays, the superintendent took advantage of the opportunity offered to open and post a set of books. These books are as simple as is consistent with practical value, and as elaborate as they could be and be kept by the superintendent and his secretary.

**Attends Teachers' Meeting.** During the latter part of the holidays, the superintendent took the occasion to attend, at his own expense, the meeting of the State Teachers' association held at Dallas. I have not missed a meeting of this association in ten years, and I feel that no man who is interested in the work he is doing, can afford to be absent from this most significant gathering of the teachers of the state.

**Objects to Readers.** Returning again to the local problem of the schools, I feel that I should call attention for the second or third time to the lack of adaptability of the readers of the third and fourth grades. In my opinion these books cannot be used to the exclusion of others, except to the injury of the children. Some time since the board of trustees was kind enough to allow us to purchase supplementary books for the use of the children in the second grade. I am now asking that you make the same provision for the third and fourth grades. This will require the outlay of perhaps \$150 or \$200, but in my opinion it will be money very wisely spent.

**Enrollment Figures.**

The usual monthly statistics of enrollment, etc., have been compiled, and since a reading of the complete table would be tedious to you, I am submitting the following vital facts of this feature.

Net enrollment in all schools to date . . . . . 5184  
Last month . . . . . 4263  
Same month last year . . . . . 4715  
Gain for month . . . . . 195  
Gain for year . . . . . 449

Belonging on the last day of the month . . . . . 4365  
Belonging last day of last month . . . . . 4303  
Belonging on same day last year . . . . . 4128  
Loss for the month . . . . . 38  
Gain for the year . . . . . 237

Average daily attendance . . . . . 4078  
Last month . . . . . 4119  
Last year . . . . . 3925  
Loss for month . . . . . 41  
Gain for year . . . . . 153

The percentage of attendance has been below normal, being less than 94 percent. This is accounted for by the continued bad weather, and by the interruption necessarily incident to the Christmas holidays. Tardiness is approximately the same as it was last month, there being only two less this month than last.

We have been unfortunate during the month in the fact that many of our teachers have been sick and absent from school. The number of days of absence reported for teachers is 104.

**School Expenses.**

The expenditures for the month are distributed as follows:  
Teachers' salaries . . . \$14,044.50  
Other employees' salaries . . 1,145.00  
Supplies . . . . . 282.97  
Manual training equipment . . 1,414.27  
Manual training supplies . . . 753.12  
Fuel . . . . . 2,215.84  
Water, light, power, etc. . . . 182.44  
Furniture and fixtures . . . . 150.00  
Repairs . . . . . 141.13  
Stationery and printing . . . . 000.00  
Library, books, etc. . . . . 15.00  
Improvements . . . . . 2,117.71  
Interest . . . . . 654.00  
Miscellaneous . . . . . 230.17  
Total . . . . . \$23,349.65

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